United Nations A/72/75–E/2017/56

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
5 April 2017

Original: English

**General Assembly**
**Seventy-second session**
Item 20 of the preliminary list*
**Sustainable development**

**Economic and Social Council**
**2017 session**
Agenda item 11
**Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits**

# Mainstreaming of the three dimensions of sustainable development throughout the United Nations system

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the United Nations system was requested to mainstream the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development throughout its work. The four progress reports submitted since then highlighted that mainstreaming sustainable development requires a commitment to integrated approaches to development, breaking down silos and enhancing coordination across sectors, both within and between organizations.

The present report explores the issue of mainstreaming sustainable development in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a transformative and universal agenda that has become the overarching framework for United Nations system efforts to advance sustainable development to eradicate poverty and leave no one behind. The Sustainable Development Goals, at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, are interlinked and indivisible, so that progress in one goal will be made only with simultaneous progress in all goals. United Nations system organizations are acknowledging the importance of this integrated and holistic nature and are shaping their priorities, strategic plans and programmes accordingly. Links between sustainable development efforts and progress in the realms of humanitarian affairs and peace and security are also noted.

* A/72/50.

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The report provides an update on work that United Nations system organizations are undertaking to integrate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into their programmes, including through the strategic planning process, the creation of updated guidelines and toolkits for use by United Nations country teams, support to Member States' voluntary reporting on the progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, regional and global forums and analytical reports, among others. The report also addresses the ways that the United Nations system is working to make its own facilities and management operations more sustainable.

# I. Introduction

1. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, Member States renewed the global commitment to sustainable development and outlined a broad vision for "The future we want",[1] centred on the eradication of poverty and hunger. They stressed that this vision would be realized only with a commitment to "mainstream sustainable development at all levels", respecting the interrelation and interdependence of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development.

2. Over the three years that followed the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Member States defined 17 Sustainable Development Goals that would become the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in September 2015. In the outcome document of the Conference, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development",[2] Member States called on the United Nations system to align its work to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and thus to mainstream sustainable development into its priorities and programmes.

3. In General Assembly resolution 71/223, Member States reiterated the mainstreaming call that originated from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and is embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They called for the "further mainstreaming of the three dimensions throughout the United Nations system," and they invited the Secretary-General to "continue to report to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on progress made, including for the consideration of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development." The present report has been prepared pursuant to that request, and it builds on the four previous reports of the Secretary-General on mainstreaming the three dimensions of sustainable development (A/71/76-E/2016/55; A/70/75-E/2015/55; A/69/79-E/2014/66; A/68/79-E/2013/69).

# II. An integrated vision

4. In the current United Nations context, mainstreaming sustainable development is often manifested by mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its integration of social, environmental and economic objectives. The 2030 Agenda represents a sea change in the approach that the United Nations system and the world at large take to development, continuing the vital work of the Millennium Development Goals, but also reflecting the emphasis on universality, integration and on leaving no one behind. The Millennium Development Goals were developed by United Nations system experts, on the basis of the Millennium Declaration, which crystallized the internationally agreed outcomes of the major United Nations summits and conferences of the 1990s.[3] The Sustainable Development Goals, on the other hand, emerged from a long and dynamic process

[1] General Assembly resolution 66/288.

[2] General Assembly resolution 70/1.

[3] Including the Fourth World Conference on Women, the International Conference on Population and Development, the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the World Summit for Social Development.

led and owned by the Member States themselves, and they apply to all countries, developing and developed. This ownership and universality, together with the integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals, make the 2030 Agenda a transformative road map for the twenty-first century.

5. Member States recognize the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, also adopted in 2015, which is rooted in the principles of sustainable development, as integral to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Together with Sustainable Development Goal 17 on global partnership, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda identifies a wide range of financial and non-financial resources required for countries to fully implement the Sustainable Development Goals, including capacities, knowledge, science and technology, information and data. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda emphasizes that effective means of implementation will require strong, long lasting actions by Governments complemented by efforts of a range of stakeholders, including the private sector.

6. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals provide the overarching vision for development, and they build on a number of intergovernmental processes and their outcomes. In addition to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, relevant outcomes include the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, the Vienna Programme of Action, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Paris Agreement on climate change, the New Urban Agenda and the Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020. These outcomes all take as their premise that sustainable development, with a balanced approach to its social, environmental and economic dimensions, and a commitment to equity within and among countries and between current and future generations, is the only way to make lasting progress in today's world.

7. Member States have also increasingly recognized the potential for development and humanitarian assistance to contribute to shared results that reduce risk and vulnerability, as well as the role of peace and security in ensuring sustainable development outcomes. The Security Council, in its resolution 2282 (2016) on sustaining peace, emphasized the importance of a "comprehensive approach to sustaining peace," including by "promoting sustained and sustainable economic growth, poverty eradication, social development, sustainable development," among other priorities. The General Assembly underscored the same concepts in its relevant resolutions. Similarly, at the World Humanitarian Summit, global leaders recognized the importance of "preventive diplomacy, sustainable development, climate change action, human rights and investments in inclusive societies" to prevent and mitigate the impact of humanitarian crises.[4]

[4] See the Chair's summary, "Standing up for humanity: committing to action", of the World Humanitarian Summit, held in Istanbul, on 23 and 24 May 2016. Available from https://consultations.worldhumanitariansummit.org/bitcache/5171492e71696bcf9d4c571c93dfc6dcd7f361ec?vid=581078&disposition=inline&op=view.

## Resolution on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

8. The General Assembly echoed this commitment to cross-pillar integration in its resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations development system. In the resolution the Assembly reaffirmed the universal and transformative nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and called for a comprehensive realignment of the United Nations development system to ensure a coherent, coordinated and integrated approach to the supporting of Member States.

9. In its resolution 71/243, the General Assembly affirmed the need to move towards "integrated action in response to the integrated and indivisible nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", called on the United Nations development system to enhance its efforts in a "flexible, timely, coherent, coordinated and integrated manner", and requested it to "mainstream the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as appropriate, into the work of each entity of the United Nations development system." The resolution further instructed the entities of the United Nations development system to reflect the 2030 Agenda in their strategic plans, to dedicate and mobilize sufficient resources to respond to the integrated nature of the Agenda, and to "ensure a coherent approach to addressing the interconnections and cross-cutting elements" of the Sustainable Development Goals, including recognition of the link between development, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian action and sustaining peace. In addition, the resolution stressed the need for increased transparency, accountability and responsiveness to maximize the Organization's impact, results and effectiveness in support of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Commitment of the Secretary-General to prevention through integration

10. When Secretary-General António Guterres took office at the beginning of 2017, he made it clear that he saw sustainable development as an important end in itself, as well as a critical component of promoting peace. The Secretary-General noted that "the links between the 2030 Agenda and sustaining peace are found not only in Goal 16 on strong institutions and inclusive societies, but across all 17 goals".[5] He has stressed that the roots of conflict can be found in "competition for power and resources, inequality, marginalization and exclusion, poor governance, weak institutions and sectarian divides",[5] and exacerbated by "climate change, population growth and the globalization of crime and terrorism".[6] The Secretary-General is pursuing integrated approaches to these challenges. In this context, he is also

[5] See Secretary-General's remarks to General Assembly High-level dialogue on "Building sustainable peace for all: synergies between the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and sustaining peace", 24 January 2017.

[6] See Secretary-General's remarks to the Security Council at the open debate on the theme "Maintenance of international peace and security: conflict prevention and sustaining peace", 10 January 2017.

emphasizing the need for a surge in diplomacy, in partnership with regional organizations.[6]

# III. Year of transition

## Work of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination

11. Throughout the current reporting period, the mainstreaming of sustainable development into the work of the United Nations system has also been advanced through actions by inter-agency coordination mechanisms, in particular the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and its subsidiary bodies. In April 2016, CEB adopted the "Common principles to guide the UN system's support to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", emphasizing the United Nations system's commitment to country-led, country-owned and results-based approaches to implementation that are people-centred and leave no one behind. The Board has also affirmed preventing and resolving crises, addressing root causes, managing risk, building resilience and sustaining peace as shared objectives of the entire United Nations system. Achieving high standards of transparency and accountability and ensuring results-oriented service delivery are also high priorities.

12. In addition, CEB has endorsed a "Statement of Commitment", developed through the High-level Committee on Programmes on the importance of combatting inequalities and discrimination while implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the Statement, CEB members affirmed the United Nations system's support to Member States' ambitions for a more equal world respectful of human rights and dignity and agreed to put that imperative at the centre of member organizations' strategic frameworks, policy guidance and global plans of action in support of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. To bring the affirmed commitment to life, a shared United Nations framework for action on equality and non-discrimination has been developed, presenting a coherent, strategic, whole-of-system approach to combating inequalities and discrimination, which is fully grounded in the norms and standards of the United Nations.

13. Also through the High-level Committee on Programmes, in 2016 CEB developed and adopted the eight "Common Core Principles for a UN system-wide Approach to Climate Action". These principles focus on the need to maximize synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change, strengthen United Nations system responsiveness to Member States' needs and build inclusive partnerships with a wide variety of stakeholders.

14. In order to reinforce and operationalize the Common Core Principles, in March 2017, under the auspices of the High-level Committee on Programmes, United Nations system entities adopted a United Nations system strategic approach on climate change action", seeking to promote and guide joint action and to deliver co-benefits across the different global agreements. The Strategic Approach identifies eight thematic impact areas that would benefit from increased and improved collaboration among United Nations system entities: normative guidance

on climate change; inter-relationship between Nationally Determined Contributions and Sustainable Development Goals implementation; climate resilience and disaster risk reduction; science, technology, knowledge and innovation; data and observations; climate finance and investment; climate change, sustainable development, peace/security, human rights and humanitarian nexus; and education, advocacy and collaborative action. Implementation of this strategic approach and its impact areas will be carried out using existing inter-agency coordination mechanisms to advance new, integrated joint initiatives.

15. In programme countries, demand for United Nations support to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development grew, with close to 100 United Nations Resident Coordinators and country teams reporting requests for support. As is discussed further below, the United Nations Development Group in 2016 built on the CEB common principles to guide United Nations support on mainstreaming and accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including through policy support.

16. United Nations organizations are also committed to ensuring that their operational infrastructure and business models are optimized to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The High-Level Committee on Management, as part of its newly adopted strategic plan for the period 2017-2020, has pledged to work towards a United Nations system with a higher degree of integration, coordination, accountability and transparency in its operations. The interconnected humanitarian, development and peace agendas will be better served by the new approaches to business models and the workforce that the United Nations system, through the High-Level Committee, has committed to deliver.

## Mainstreaming sustainable development into strategic plans

17. In General Assembly resolution 67/226, on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, Member States called for mainstreaming sustainable development into United Nations entities' work. In General Assembly resolution 71/243, on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, Member States repeated the call to "continue to mainstream the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into the work of each entity of the United Nations development system" and specifically to mainstream the Sustainable Development Goals into their strategic planning documents. Member States further requested entities to outline a common approach in contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at various Executive Board meetings throughout 2016. Notably, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund and the Executive Boards of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) made the decision to include a common chapter in each of their strategic plans.[7]

[7] See www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/executive%20board/2017/first%20regular%20session%202017/draft%20decision%2020171%20140217%20final%20as%20adopted%20advance%20unedited%20copy.pdf?vs=2107.

18. Broadly speaking, United Nations system organizations are taking steps, using a variety of approaches, to align their work to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The United Nations Strategic Planning Network, an informal network of strategic planning and results-based management professional staff from across the United Nations system, took stock at its recent annual meeting and found that most organizations can report some type of progress in this alignment.[8]

19. Several organizations have reviewed strategic or medium-term plans and presented the findings to their governing bodies (e.g. WFP, FAO, ILO, UNDP, regional commissions); others are setting up an internal mechanism for their review and elaboration (e.g. ITU, IFAD) by the end of 2017. The process of alignment in general is made more complex by the fact that organizations are simultaneously working to integrate other global commitments and outcomes tied to their core mandates and missions, including the Paris Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

20. While most organizations are working to align their programming holistically to the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, some have started by prioritizing those Sustainable Development Goals that are closest to the Organization's core mandates. Some are also carrying out analysis to determine the Sustainable Development Goals targets where they can provide support through existing programmes and achieve concrete results in a relatively short timeframe. Organizations have acknowledged the tension between gravitating towards existing data and indicators (often inherited from the Millennium Development Goals era) and strengthening capacity to assess progress against the new set of Sustainable Development Goals indicators.

21. United Nations organizations, including FAO, IFAD, ITU, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNV, UN-Women and WFP, have developed a range of internal performance monitoring systems, dashboards, reports and briefs for reporting results towards mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals into their programming. As an example, UNEP has developed a live Sustainable Development Goals portal, which allows for the mapping of partnerships around the Sustainable Development Goals. ITU has developed a tool to report on its work around the different Sustainable Development Goals, and FAO has developed a dashboard to monitor trends of relevant Sustainable Development Goals indicators. UNV now tracks the annual more than 26,500 online and on-site United Nations Volunteer assignments

[8] Held on 1 and 2 December 2016, in Rome; 50 strategic planners from 22 organizations of the United Nations participated in the meeting (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), International Trade Centre (ITC), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, Universal Postal Union (UPU), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO) and World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)).

by Sustainable Development Goals and for the online United Nations Volunteer assignments by relevant Sustainable Development Goal indicator.

22. At the regional level, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has developed an integrated policy model to identify Sustainable Development Goals cross-linkages.[9] In addition, ESCAP and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) jointly support the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia as a subregional platform in Central Asia for mainstreaming the three dimensions of sustainable development into national development strategies, as well as for reviewing and reporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to respective regional and global forums. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has identified three priority nexus areas (water-energy-food security nexus, poverty-decent work-sustainable growth nexus and equality-inclusion-justice nexus) where the region can pilot a methodology for analysing interlinkages between goals and targets across different sectors.

23. In their strategic planning, United Nations organizations recognize that securing adequate financial and non-financial resources is a prerequisite for supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and mainstreaming sustainable development in a meaningful way. It is clear that the United Nations will have to mobilize a wide range of capacities, technology, knowledge and expertise to promote 2030 Agenda implementation. As part of the strategic planning process, organizations are seeking innovative ways to secure the needed financial and non-financial resources.

## Follow-up to the World Humanitarian Summit

24. At the conclusion of the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the heads of eight United Nations entities, with the endorsement of the World Bank and the International Organization for Migration, issued a Commitment to Action to "transcend the humanitarian development divide" and work towards collective outcomes that reduce needs, risk and vulnerability.[10] The document declared that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides "a common results framework under which both humanitarian and development actors can work together to ensure the safety, dignity and ability to thrive of the most vulnerable", recognizing the imperative to fully respect humanitarian principles. These leaders committed to pursue these shared results, based on context, through the use of (i) pooled and combined data, analysis and information; (ii) better joined up planning and programming processes; (iii) effective leadership for collective outcomes; and (iv) financing modalities to support collective outcomes.[11]

[9] For more information on the model used to identify the priority and sequencing at the national level for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, see Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2016. Adapting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the National Level* (Bangkok, 2016). Available from www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/CSN%20Report%202016.pdf.

[10] FAO, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, WFP and WHO.

[11] Available from www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/sites/default/files/media/WHS%20Commitment%20to%20Action_8September2016.pdf.

25. Since the Summit commitment, the organizations have started operationalizing these commitments in different settings. In February 2017, in West Africa, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP convened resident coordinators and humanitarian coordinators, donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and members of the broader development and humanitarian communities to kick-start the new integrated approach in the region. In March 2017, the Government of Denmark organized a meeting, together with the World Bank, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP, to demonstrate high-level engagement in the agenda and to further explore implications at the country level for United Nations entities, NGOs and other partners, and Member States. During 2017 and into 2018, country and regional-level discussions will continue to sustain the strong momentum around achieving better results for people in vulnerable settings, particularly those facing protracted and recurrent crises. While gaining and maintaining humanitarian access during acute crises will remain a priority, these interventions will need to link to long-term sustainable development efforts.[12]

## Transforming normative guidance into country strategies: United Nations Development Assistance Framework Guidance

26. To address both the challenges and the opportunities inherent in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations Development Group has produced a set of guidelines for the preparation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The new guidance orients United Nations programming to the 2030 Agenda, with an emphasis on programming approaches aligning sustainable development, humanitarian, human rights and peacebuilding action.[13] As the guidance notes, UNDAFs must operate in contexts where other frameworks, including the humanitarian response plans, will also be in effect. The guidance further identifies "leaving no one behind" as the overarching principle, and asserts that this principle is bolstered by a commitment to human rights, gender equality, sustainability and resilience and accountability.[13] The new UNDAF Guidance addresses emerging trends in country demand for United Nations support to the 2030 Agenda, building on the United Nations Development Group mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support approach, and mainstreams the three dimensions of sustainable development and principles underlying the 2030 Agenda.[14]

[12] The topic of mainstreaming the three dimensions of sustainable development by linking the developmental efforts with humanitarian efforts is particularly important in the context of the Arab region which is facing an unprecedented level of crisis and displacement. The current refugee crisis in the Arab region provides a good example of where development and humanitarian approaches need to come together.

[13] United Nations Development Group, "United Nations Development Assistance Framework: guidance" (February 2017).

[14] In the mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support approach, "mainstreaming" aims to generate awareness among relevant actors and help Governments incorporate the agenda into national and subnational plans, strategies and budgets; "acceleration" aims to help Governments accelerate progress in multiple targets, identifying constraints to progress in a number of goals most relevant to the local context; and "policy support" means that multiagency and multidisciplinary teams are able to offer surge support to countries on specific issues, while also helping them to strengthen institutional capacities.

27. The new generation of UNDAFs will address the multidimensional causes of poverty, inequalities and discrimination and will seek to reduce vulnerabilities of the most marginalized people. They will promote closer working arrangements and coherence across the development, humanitarian, human rights and peacebuilding agendas, integrating the principles of sustainability and resilience, including with multidimensional approaches to managing disaster risks and climate impacts, and protection of development gains. They will also aim to forge stronger linkages between the United Nations normative and operational contributions and among the local, regional and global dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[15] Through six mutually reinforcing programming approaches, the United Nations system will be enabled to deliver on the principles of the 2030 Agenda, namely, results-focused programming, capacity development, risk-informed programming, development, humanitarian and peacebuilding linkages, coherent policy support and partnerships.

28. A robust, nationally driven and flexible common country analysis (the United Nations impartial assessment of a country situation)[13] will reflect the multiple risks that countries face, including those that could trigger economic loss and political tensions, and undermine and reverse progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The next generation of UNDAFs, building on the common country assessments, will promote an approach that mobilizes the whole United Nations system in a coherent and coordinated manner towards sustaining peace and building peace in fragile and conflict-affected settings, in line with the General Assembly and the Security Council resolution on sustaining peace.

## United Nations Evaluation Group

29. In 2016, the United Nations Evaluation Group issued revised guidelines that incorporate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into the norms and standards of evaluators working in the United Nations system. The first norm asserts that "within the United Nations system, it is the responsibility of evaluation managers and evaluators to uphold and promote, in their evaluation practice, the principles and values to which the United Nations is committed. In particular, they should respect, promote and contribute to the goals and targets set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". Evaluators are required to exhibit core competencies, including knowledge of the Sustainable Development Goals, among other principles.[16]

[15] For instance, ESCAP is developing a guidance document in 2017 to ensure coherence in the approaches to disaster risk reduction and resilience across six policy frameworks: (a) Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030; (b) Sustainable Development Goals; (c) Paris Agreement on climate change; (d) Agenda for Humanity; (e) New Urban Agenda; and (f) Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

[16] United Nations Evaluation Group, "Norms and standards for evaluation" (June 2016). Available from www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914.

# IV. Early progress in implementation by the Secretariat

## Support at the national level

30. The United Nations Development Group has prepared the guidelines on support country reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals for its United Nations country teams. These practical guidelines, recently endorsed by the Group, emphasize the importance of national ownership, as well as the vital supporting role the United Nations system can play to make country-led reviews robust, inclusive and participatory. The guidelines propose possible structures for national Sustainable Development Goals reports, offer guidance on the types of stakeholders to engage and ways to engage them, and present a range of analytical approaches that could assist in the preparation of country reports. These approaches include trend analysis, focus group discussions, poverty and social impact analysis and benefit incidence analysis and microsimulations. In addition, the guidelines include checklists and a listing of resources available to support Sustainable Development Goals reporting. They aim to build mutual accountability, facilitate policy dialogue, build capacity in the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals indicators framework and advocate for effective reporting on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

31. In addition, early guidance to countries starting new UNDAFs in 2016 — even before the new UNDAF guidelines were formally endorsed — has also yielded positive results. These UNDAFs show an enhanced focus on fewer strategic priorities; greater emphasis on the normative agenda; support to quality data collection, monitoring and reporting; and increased use of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation. Member States are also pursuing multi-country UNDAFs where appropriate and fostering broader multi-stakeholder engagement.

## Support at the regional level

32. The United Nations regional commissions have taken steps to increase integration and to align programmes and procedures with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through the Regional Coordination Mechanism, which strengthens inter-agency collaboration and ensures coherence of United Nations policy and programmes at the regional level. Activities to support achievement of the 2030 Agenda have been integrated into the work programmes of the regional commissions and are realized through analytical work, capacity-building and technical cooperation, and intergovernmental processes.[17] Tangible results have been achieved by organizing regional level work across sectors and by establishing joint intergovernmental groups.[18] In a recent Statement of

[17] For instance, the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (a joint programme of ECE and WHO).

[18] Examples in the ECE region include the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators and the Joint Task Force on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings in the ECE region, cross-sectoral reviews in countries (for example, environmental performance reviews, country profiles on housing and land management and innovation performance reviews) and developing cross-sectoral policies and initiatives (for example, the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy).

Collaboration,[19] the United Nations Development Group and the regional commissions emphasized the role of the regional commissions in supporting the implementation of the Agenda, and the importance of regional institutions as bridges between the global and national levels.

33. In addition, the Regional Fora on Sustainable Development serve as platforms for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other related global development agendas. They promote peer learning and exchange of experiences and mobilize coherent regional inputs for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. They also offer space for identification of regional trends, assessment of progress across countries in the adoption of national sustainability strategies and development of regional programmes for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. Further, the regional commissions produce an annual regional progress report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals with inputs from other United Nations entities, which feeds into the Regional Fora on Sustainable Development.

## Support from global headquarters

34. Headquarters-based United Nations secretariat organizations are likewise offering technical support to Member States in response to their requests, capitalizing on their expertise and knowledge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, focusing on integration and implementation processes. Notably, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat serves as the secretariat for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the central platform for follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda. Through reviewing progress, sharing good practices and encouraging the exchange of ideas, the Forum aims to advance progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and address emerging issues, while strengthening the science-policy interface.

35. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs works closely with the President and Bureau of the Economic and Social Council in supporting the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, including through innovative initiatives in designing a programme that encourages mutual learning. In 2017, the Forum theme is "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world", and the closely aligned theme of the Economic and Social Council session is "Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities and addressing related challenges".

36. Central to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is the presentation of the voluntary national reviews. Member States are invited to undertake voluntary national reviews, with a view to advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including by strengthening a country's institutional arrangements, strategic planning and, ultimately, its capacity for further implementation. The 2030 Agenda emphasizes that national reviews will

[19] See www.regionalcommissions.org/collabundg2016.pdf.

be State-led and will include "developed and developing countries, as well as relevant United Nations entities and other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector". The Agenda also notes that the reviews will provide a "platform for partnerships".[20]

37. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is supporting voluntary national review preparation in a variety of ways, including by organizing a series of workshops where countries share strategies, challenges and early wins. Countries undertaking voluntary national reviews are encouraged to take a holistic approach to the reviews and to emphasize the interrelationship among Sustainable Development Goals and the links between the global sustainable development vision and local and national priorities. The workshops are designed to maximize communication and exchange of experiences and lessons learned among voluntary national review countries in any given year (as well as facilitate exchange between one year's voluntary national review cohort and the next).

38. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations regional commissions are collaborating to prepare regional level workshops as well, where voluntary national review countries will explore region-specific challenges and opportunities, including strategies on the best ways to engage major groups and other stakeholders and other non-United Nations regional partners. Regional workshops give voluntary national review countries and United Nations system organizations the opportunity for mutual support and learning. The voluntary national reviews and the regional level workshops provide important substantive inputs to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

39. Member States also mandated the United Nations system to provide additional substantive inputs through two reports — the progress report of the Secretary-General on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Sustainable Development Report. The progress report tracks progress on individual Sustainable Development Goals, and is framed to accommodate the integrated nature of the Agenda. Member States envisioned the Global Sustainable Development Report as an independent "assessment of assessments" designed to strengthen the science-policy interface for sustainable development. In the Ministerial Declaration of the 2016 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, Member States decided that the progress report would be prepared by an independent group of 15 scientists, representing all relevant disciplines, with regional and gender balance. The independent group, appointed by the Secretary-General, has begun its work, with the support of a United Nations task team consisting of UNCTAD, UNEP, UNDP, World Bank, UNESCO and the United Nations Secretariat. The independent group met for the first time in February 2017, and as part of their meeting, they briefed Member States on their planned approach, stressing the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda, and therefore of the progress report of the Secretary-General on sustainable development. The report is due to be published in June 2019, when the Forum will meet under the auspices of the General Assembly.

40. Other forums are also advancing the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In servicing the Development Cooperation Forum, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has initiated new analytical work and

[20] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld.

multi-stakeholder engagement around effective development cooperation to support the profound policy and programme integration required by the Sustainable Development Goals. The Forum will also facilitate inclusive cross-sector partnerships and provide capacity support for policy coherence for sustainable development, including through better linkages between development cooperation and humanitarian assistance and by promoting systematic investment in building the resilience of countries and communities (see E/2016/65).

41. This work contributed to the strong recommendations emerging from the 2016 high-level meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum on how development cooperation can support the changes in mind-set and action needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals: from sectoral to integrated approaches; from governmental to whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches; from measuring development in terms of income or growth to considering the multiple dimensions of poverty, sustainability and inclusivity; and from financing to the broader partnership dimension and effective engagement of all stakeholders.[21]

42. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda mandated a number of forums and mechanisms to advance the implementation of sustainable development. The Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up is designed to assess progress, identify obstacles and challenges and share lessons learned on the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and on follow-up and review of the financing for development outcomes. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda also created the Global Infrastructure Forum to address the critical importance of bridging the infrastructure gap as a prerequisite to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, both the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda called for a Technology Facilitation Mechanism to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through multi-stakeholder partnerships and joint work, involving Member States, civil society, the private sector, the scientific community, United Nations entities and other stakeholders. Integral to the Technology Facilitation Mechanism is an annual multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the sustainable development goals. In all of these forums, deliberations are predicated on the principle that an integrated approach, encompassing all three dimensions of sustainable development, will be essential.

## Integrating sustainable development into United Nations operations and facilities management

43. In resolution 71/228, the General Assembly called on the Secretary-General to submit an action plan for integrating sustainable development practices into United Nations Secretariat operations and facilities with the specific goal of a United Nations that does not have a negative impact on the climate by 2020, if practicable. The Secretariat has developed the requested action plan, which will be submitted to the General Assembly by the end of its seventy-first session.

[21] Available from www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/dcf/2016-dcf-official-summary.pdf.

44. The Environment Management Group continues to support enhancing and integrating sustainability across management and operations of the United Nations system. The Group is advancing the inter-agency consultative process for enhancing environmental and social sustainability of the United Nations system (environment and social sustainability process), in order to raise awareness and exchange knowledge on the links between the Sustainable Development Goals and the sustainability of United Nations operations. The Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations system was piloted in seven agencies, resulting in a synthesis report and recommendations for how the implementation of the Framework could be further supported. Lessons learned in the pilot phase will be used to produce a revised Implementation Guide[22] and to communicate the links between the Framework and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

45. The United Nations system has also achieved progress in the integration of sustainable development considerations in the management of facilities and operations.[23] In 2015, a road map towards climate neutrality by 2020 was agreed by CEB. The road map commits all United Nations system organizations to continue to measure, reduce and offset greenhouse gas emission and integrate environmental considerations into the planning for facilities and operations. Within the Environment Management Group, the Sustainable United Nations facility leads these efforts.

46. The system-wide progress on these goals was made public in November 2016 in the annual *Greening the Blue Report*, which provided data on greenhouse gas emissions from 66 United Nations entities and released for the first time data on waste management efforts from 44 United Nations entities.[24] The report highlighted a positive growth in systematic approaches to environmental management: more than 25 United Nations entities have an emissions reductions strategy or are implementing an environment management system for facilities and operations. Energy efficiency, waste management, travel and staff awareness are the most commonly addressed topics in these strategies. Only a few agencies have clear and quantifiable emission reduction targets, but 32 United Nations entities offset their remaining emissions through the purchase of Certified Emissions Reduction credits under the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol.

47. Integration of sustainable development considerations is not only restricted to internal operations and facilities; it also extends to programming. Partnerships; for example; the Joint Environment Unit of UNEP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs strengthen the integration of sustainability considerations in humanitarian programming and operations.

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[22] Available from https://unemg.org/consultative-processes/environmental-and-social-sustainability.

[23] General Assembly resolutions 66/288 and 67/226 called upon the United Nations system to improve the management of facilities and operations by taking into account sustainable development practices, building on existing efforts and promoting cost-effectiveness, and in accordance with legislative frameworks, including financial rules and regulations, while maintaining accountability to Member States.

[24] See www.greeningtheblue.org/what-the-un-is-doing/united-nations-system.

## V. Conclusion

48. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is unprecedented in its integrated approach and level of ambition on people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships, and the Member States and the United Nations system have rallied behind it as the driving force behind all development activities and plans. While the United Nations development system entities are individually taking important steps to mainstream the 2030 Agenda into their work and programmatic instruments, a system-wide approach to the Sustainable Development Goals needs to be strengthened, in line with the resolution on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review. While mandates and projects can be relatively easily aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals on paper, ensuring true impact and developing ways to measure system-wide impact remain challenges. The way forward begins with committing ourselves to keeping a relentless focus on the follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals, the quality of our partnerships and the results achieved for sustainable development.